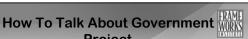
Changing The Public Conversation WRK **About Government:**

Framing Effective Messages for Social Change



Uniting For Early Childhood Bismarck, ND Aug. 5-6, 2008

Diane Benjamin and Jane Feinberg FrameWorks Institute



Project Two years of intensive research into:

- How people perceive and think about government
- The "frames" that dominate their perceptions
- The implications of those frames

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How To Talk About Government WARK **Project**



With the goals of:

- Identifying ways to shift public perception
- Rebuilding awareness of and support for government's role in society
- Creating concrete communications tools for those who seek broader support for government capacity to address and solve social challenges.

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Project Goals



This is about:

- Valuing a proactive role for government
- Engaging the public in improving government
- Being non-partisan
- Creating more engaged citizens

This is not about:

- "Liking" government
- Promoting satisfaction with government
- · Being partisan or even bi-partisan
- "Spinning" government

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Research Completed WORKS



- A meta-analysis of existing public opinion research
- Cognitive interviews or one-on-one open-ended interviews
- Focus groups
- Development of a simplifying model
- A national survey n=2500; tested reframes against controls

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First Step: Investigate the Swamp

What's "top of mind" or "easy to think" about government?



- meta-analysis of existing public opinion research
- cognitive interviews

2

What We Learned: Top of Mind Perceptions about "Government"

Bureaucratic

Greedy

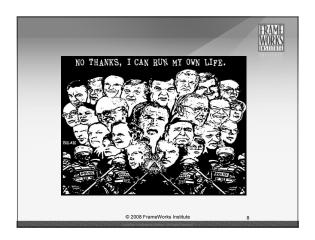
Corrupt^{NECESSARY EVIL}

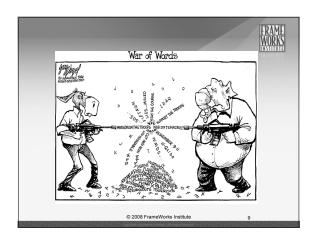
Wasteful IRRELEVANT

Political

Out for

themselves







"More Americans can name the three stooges than the three branches of government.

Well, that's because the three stooges are more likely to get something done."

David Letterman

Problematic Perceptions



- 67% Government generally pursues its own agenda.
- 64% I feel distant and disconnected from government.
- 64% The federal government creates more problems than it solves
- 63% Government serves the special interests.
- 57% When something is run by the government it is usually inefficient and wasteful
- 71% Poor people have become too dependent on government assistance programs

Source: Hart-Teeter, CBS New 19- Few research to the People? A Meta Analysis of Public Opinion of Government

Typical Findings and Recommendations

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Public Perception

Presumed Solution

Government is ineffective; it can't do anything right.

Give the public examples of effective government actions and programs.

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Typical Findings and Recommendations



Public Perception

Presumed Solution

Government doesn't affect me.

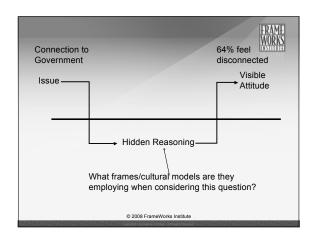
Connect people to government by reminding them of the ways that government touches their daily

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Strategic Frame Analysis: Is the problem what you think it is?

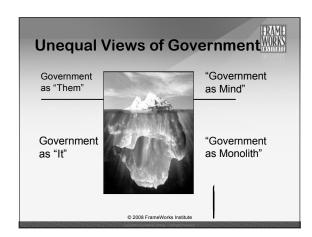


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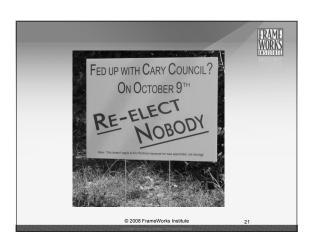




Situation Analysis There are two dominant understandings of government that direct people's thinking...



Government as Them: The Visible / Elected Leadership Implications: Appreciate necessity of government but . . . Adopt a spectator stance Exaggerate role of politics Interpret "government" as current administration Consensus function is largely invisible



Government as "It": Everything Below the Surface and Unseen

Implications:

- •Masks much of what government is and does
- •Underestimate size of government
- •Obscures public and private sector distinction
- ■Exaggerate waste, bloat and inefficiency
- ■Confused and ignorant about where tax money goes

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Conclusion: Government as Paradox

- FRAME WORKS
- Very rhetorically charged, very boring
- Huge and bloated, yet "hundreds" of people
- Wanting services, but not taxes
- For both Mind and Monolith, government is "the other"; either "Them" or "It"

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The overarching challenge: The dominant frames of: Are overtaking: Citizenship Consumerism ■ Capitalism/Free Market Democracy Government as Government as "them" "us" © 2008 FrameWorks Institute The overarching challenge: ". . . it all comes down to whether you look out and see a nation of consumers or a nation of citizens." - Bill Moyers © 2008 FrameWorks Institute

The Citizen Perspective The Consumer Perspective ▶ Government is a necessary agent in ▶ Government takes money maximizing quality of life. that people could use. ▶ Government redistributes ▶ Government redistributes risk - think Social Security. income - think taxes ▶ Government works with citizens and business to ▶ Government is a drag on the economy and a barrier create economic to business. opportunity.

Consider the Contrasts:

Consider the Contrasts: The Consumer The Citizen Perspective Perspective ▶ Government services ▶ Government services are offer protection and for the lazy; those who empowerment when work hard will succeed. needed. ▶ Government is the ▶ Government is our tool problem. for solutions. © 2008 FrameWorks Institute

What We're Up Against



- ▶ The mission of government is missing from public discourse, and thus lines between public and private sectors are blurred
- A consumer stance underlies many of the problematic perceptions of government.
- ▶ Problematic perceptions of government are not solely driven by ideology. Democrats and Republicans share many views of government.
- ▶ Literal responses to address negative perceptions are ineffective

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The Graveyard of Framing WRS **Hypotheses**



■ Hypothesis #1: By presenting the public with examples of government workers and services, they will appreciate government in their lives.

In reality: It generates a discussion of whether business can do it better and cheaper

The Graveyard of Framing WRK **Hypotheses**



■ Hypothesis #2: By telling vivid stories of people helped by government programs, people will value and support government for all

In reality: Reinforces nanny government/government as a crutch.

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Missing frame ingredients in the public's thinking about government



- Its mission as distinct from, but not antithetical to, business
- A persona more in keeping with democratic ideals: protector, responsible manager, long-term planner, the people's voice
- Its connection to values that the country as a whole embraces: future, stewardship, and the building and preservation of community
- Reinforcement of the notion of shared fate, in the form of the common good or quality of life, which gives rise to government in the first place

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Next Questions:



- How can we strengthen citizenship?
- How can a citizen mindset become more dominant than a consumer mindset?
- How can we rebuild government as "us"?
- What other persona can government adopt?

protector? manager? planner? watchdog? consensus builder? voice of the people?

How do we get from where we are to where we need to be?

Final step: Establish the core frame elements that will redirect thinking

Tools to promote the value of active government

- •Focus Groups
- •Simplifying Models Development
- •National Priming Survey

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New	Tools	to	Work	With:
	Two	Va	alues	

- FRAME WORKS INSTITUTE
- The Protection Frame communicates that the role of the public sector is to protect citizens from physical and financial harm.
- The Common Good Frame states that public sector institutions rely upon citizens who work together to come to consensus for the common good and to improve quality of life.

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Sample Test Language: Protection Frame



We rely on our public institutions to set and enforce the regulations that will protect us from physical and financial harm. There are a variety of ways that federal, state and local agencies protect the public including: food quality standards, environmental controls, financial securities regulations, consumer fraud protections, workplace and product safety standards, to name a few. With the support of citizens and business, public sector institutions can set and enforce these protections on behalf of the public good.

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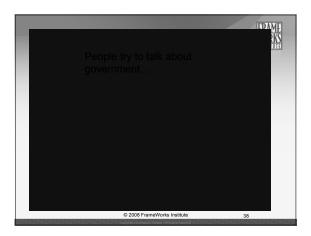
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Sample Test Language: **Common Good Frame**



Our nation's success is based upon the power of people working together and each in his own way. We all benefit when citizens work with the public sector to identify problems and come to consensus on a vision to address those problems. Whether it is revitalizing a crumbling downtown, restoring parkland, or determining health and safety regulations, our nation's quality of life now and into the future depends upon citizens and public agencies working for the common good.

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We investigated many potential RAME WORKS directions



- Government as "Us"
- Government as Lasting/Long-term Structure
- Government as the vehicle for focusing on the Common Good
- Government as referee, parameter-setter, regulator
- "Public Forces" contrasted with "Market Forces"
- \bullet A set of instruments for problem-solving (public tools, public machinery, public toolkit)
- Government as service providers
- Public/Private dualism U.S. life as a balance between these two aspects: twin pillars
- Governance as collective "conscience" government's
- Government as Partneா (உருமwith மியsiness, churches)

New Tools to Work With: Public Structures Model



The main advantages that make America so successful come from what are called Public Structures. The Public Structures America has created include physical structures we need in order to get things done – like highways, airports, and communications grids – as well as the organizational structures we need, like a postal system for delivering mail and courts for settling business disagreements. Developing nations have many smart, hard-working individuals, but they don't have the Public Structures that are essential for overall success.



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Public Structures Model



- Overcomes the dominant models of relationship between government and citizens
- Provides a more complete picture of what government is and does
- Avoids relying on individuals (civil servants, elected officials) to be the face of government
- Based on language that can slip into common use

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Reframing "Responsibility"



- Consumer Stance Responsibility for Me
- Altruistic Stance Responsibility for Them
- Manager Stance Responsibility for It/Us

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VALUES Common Good Protector/Responsible Manager DOMAIN (Government) simplifying model Public Structures Setting quality standards Expanding pre-K programs Changing licensing regulations

Survey says.... Moving in a Good Direction



When people are primed with values (common good, protection) and a more concrete description of what government is and does (public structures) they were more likely to suggest that:

- government had a positive role in people's lives,
- regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest
- government should do more to solve problems

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45

Survey says.... Moving in a Good Direction



There were also decreases in the numbers of respondents who believed:

- •The role of the public sector should be to promote the principle of self-reliance
- •government is doing too many things that should be left to individuals and business

There were also positive improvements in policy questions that supported a more active role for government and a more balanced approach to budget and tax decisions.

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Structure of the Govt Story WRKS



· Level 1 Value: Our nation's success is based on the power of people working together...Whether it is revitalizing a crumbling downtown, restoring parkland, or determining health and safety regulations, our nation's quality of life now and into the future depends upon citizens working together.

Structure of the Govt Story WORKS



· Level 2 via Model: The public structures Americans have created – from laws to highways and schools - are the machinery that produces American success and quality of life.

Structure of the Govt Story WORKS



• Level 3 Solution: That's why we cannot tie the hands of the public sector through laws that limit its flexibility; we need to use government as one among many tools to aid us in innovating and problemsolving for the long-term.

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Structure of the Govt Story



- Level 1 Value: Our nation's success is based on the power of people working together...Whether it is revitalizing a crumbling downtown, restoring parkland, or determining health and safety regulations, our nation's quality of life now and into the future depends upon citizens working together.
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Reframing Government: Synopsis WRV



The Frame We've Got:

• Goal: specific Level 3 policy agenda

- Politics, Bureaucracy
- Actor: Government
- Ideological
- Individual

The Frame We Need:

- · Mission: Common Good, Protection
- · Essential Structures
- · Actor: Citizens
- · Pragmatic
- · Collective

FRAME	
Reframing Government: Synopsis	
The Frame We've Got: Consumer • Consumer • Consumer • Consumer • Consumer • Consumer • Consumer	
 Nanny/Crutch It, the other Anti-rogue business Life Quality/community 	
Programs and taxes	
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What We Have to Do WORK	
Issuite	
Avoid triggering the dominant and negative	
frames "Them" – just politics / partisan bickering	
"It" – blurry, bloated bureaucracy Consumer – "what's in it for me"	
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What We Have to Do Wirk	
Elevate the mission and purpose of government – what makes it different than the private sector – and connect it to quality of life common interests and other values.	

What We Have to Do



 Make government more vivid; foster concrete and pragmatic thinking about what government is and does – focus on structures and systems.

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What We Have to Do



 Remind the public of effective community action that does and can happen through the public sector and its partnerships with business, non-profits and communities.

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What We Have to Do



 Foster long-term thinking and governing as stewardship and responsible management.

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